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**COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE**

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CHAIRMAN: ENERGY  
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**CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES**  
**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES**  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515

March 25, 2020

Mr. Michael Carvajal  
Director  
Federal Bureau of Prisons  
320 1st Street NW  
Washington, DC 20534-0002

Dear Director Carvajal:

As the United States continues to weather the ramifications of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the resulting illness (COVID-19), the U.S. prison population remains at extreme risk of infection. That is why I was pleased to hear the President's statement that the administration is looking to release elderly, nonviolent prisoners in an attempt to mitigate any risk of infection.<sup>1</sup>

As you know, the close quarters present in our nation's jails and prisons present a clear and ongoing risk of infection.<sup>2</sup> This, coupled with the fact that prisoners across the country — including in my home state of Illinois<sup>3</sup> — have tested positive for this virus, underscores the need for action. It is also important to recognize that although the number of infected cases in prisons appears to be low at this time, the number of infected will likely increase exponentially, as has happened across the U.S.

The elderly population, at large, is especially vulnerable to this disease and this is even more true when faced with the close confines of a prison environment. Therefore, while I was encouraged by the President's statement that "we're going to take a look at it,"<sup>4</sup> I would encourage you and your agency to move swiftly on this issue. Doing so would not only protect the health and lives of the hundreds of thousands of inmates under your jurisdiction, but would also serve to shield the public servants employed by the Bureau from infection as well.

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<sup>1</sup> Cranley, Ellen. "Trump Is Considering Releasing Elderly, 'Totally Nonviolent' Offenders from Federal Prisons amid Coronavirus Outbreak." Business Insider. Business Insider, March 22, 2020.  
<https://www.businessinsider.com/trump-consider-coronavirus-executive-order-federal-prisons2020-3>.

<sup>2</sup> Lopez. "A Coronavirus Outbreak in Jails or Prisons Could Turn into a Nightmare." Vox. Vox, March 17, 2020.  
<https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2020/3/17/21181515/coronavirus-covid-19-jails-prisons-mass-incarceration>.

<sup>3</sup> Crepeau, Megan, and Annie Sweeney. "Two COVID-19 Cases Identified at Cook County Jail as Calls Increase for Early Releases." chicagotribune.com. Chicago Tribune, March 23, 2020.  
<https://www.chicagotribune.com/coronavirus/ct-coronavirus-jail-cases-releases-20200323-pot4pyw4zrhpnoaguawwxztina-story.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Cranley, Ellen. "Trump Is Considering Releasing Elderly, 'Totally Nonviolent' Offenders from Federal Prisons amid Coronavirus Outbreak." Business Insider. Business Insider, March 22, 2020.  
<https://www.businessinsider.com/trump-consider-coronavirus-executive-order-federal-prisons2020-3>.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. Should you or your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bobby L. Rush". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bobby" being more prominent than the last name "Rush".

Bobby L. Rush  
Member of Congress